

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
 PRESS CONFERENCE, WITH FRENCH MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENSE FRANCOIS LEOTARD,
 FOLLOWING DISCUSSIONS ON COOPERATING IN THE BOSNIAN SITUATION
 PENTAGON
 DECEMBER 12, 1994

(NOTE: MINISTER LEOTARD'S REMARKS
 ARE THROUGH INTERPRETER UNLESS
 INDICATED OTHERWISE.)

STAFF: Secretary Perry will start with a brief statement, followed by Minister Leotard, and then we'll take questions.

SEC. PERRY: Minister Francois Leotard and myself and some of our staffs have had very good discussions this morning focused on ways of the United States and France cooperating in the ongoing operations in Bosnia.

Both the United States and France believe that the UNPROFOR, that is the U.N. mission in Bosnia, performs a very valuable function. In the absence of UNPROFOR, there would be a very great difficulty in delivering humanitarian aid. We fear that if UNPROFOR leaves there would be an increase in the violence associated with the war and an increased danger of the war spreading to other regions. For all of those reasons, we believe it is important for UNPROFOR to remain in place. We discussed ways of making UNPROFOR more effective and we'll discuss those further and make specific suggestions and proposals both to the U.N. and NATO.

We also discussed the contingency of UNPROFOR leaving. We recognize that if UNPROFOR is not able to perform its mission, becomes ineffective, there would be great pressure on the nations involved to leave. We also recognize that if the United States were to unilaterally lift the embargo that the nations that are in the UNPROFOR forces, many of them would leave. And that's one of the reasons that the United States is strongly opposing the unilateral lifting of the embargo.

However, if UNPROFOR does leave, the United States has agreed to participate in a NATO operation to assist in that withdrawal. And Minister

Leotard and myself discussed this morning how that operation would be conducted and ways in which the United States and France could cooperate in its execution. We both agreed that any such operation, the military force that goes into Bosnia for that purpose should have overwhelming military strength so that it would not invite an attack and so that it could competently execute its mission. And we also both agreed that the United States and France would be major participants in any such operation.

Let me now invite Minister Leotard to make some opening comments.

MIN. LEOTARD: I beg your pardon for my bad English and I prefer to speak in French, if you permit.

(Through translator.) I would like to begin by underscoring the friendly and open atmosphere that existed throughout this morning's discussions. They are a reflection of the kind of relationship that we've had for many, many months between myself and Bill Perry. In fact, ever since the Aviano meeting, before the Sarajevo ultimatum, all the way up to this day, our relationship has been characterized by fruitful contacts and cooperation on a constant basis, and this is not just a reflection of the two men you see sitting here, but also a reflection of the general relations between the United States and France.

I would also like to express my government's respect for the U.S. presence in the former Yugoslavia. Many people often forget that the United States is present in the area. They have troops in Zagreb, they have Navy troops -- the Navy is present in the Adriatic, the Air Force is present in Italy, there are AWACS planes, and there are also American troops present in Macedonia. This is very important.

I expressed to Bill Perry this morning my government's position regarding the contingency of a withdrawal of the UNPROFOR forces in Bosnia. My government does not wish to see this withdrawal take place, and this is due to what we see as being four dramatic implications of such a withdrawal.

Firstly, this would imply a massive displacement of population. Secondly, it would lead to the mechanical spreading of the conflict both to the north and the south. It would also change the nature of the conflict, for it would bring in the Islamic forces into this area. And finally, and this is the most serious implication of all, it would

undermine the credibility of international organizations, namely, the United Nations and NATO.

We look at all the different scenarios that are before us, and France welcomes very positively the United States commitment to engage ground troops in case of the contingency of a withdrawal of UNPROFOR forces from Bosnia. We also discussed how France might be involved in such a withdrawal operation. But that was not the only thing that we discussed. We discussed other scenarios as well, all of the scenarios that would enable us to develop further cooperation in the future.

Obviously, there will be future meetings, meetings at NATO level, bilateral meetings with our British counterparts, with our Spanish counterparts and other European counterparts.

And with that being said, I'm now willing to field any questions you have.

Q: I'm Charlie (Ellinger ?) with Reuters. I might ask the minister: If UNPROFOR cannot be made more effective, is it then an obvious result that peacekeepers would be withdrawn? And how could UNPROFOR be made more effective? Would it require more troops? Would it require peacemaking instead of peacekeeping?

MIN. LEOTARD: There are two ways of strengthening the efficacy of UNPROFOR forces.

One would be of course to send in reinforcements, to increase the number of troops on the ground. However, in the near future, this does not seem like a very likely scenario. The other thing to do would be to strengthen the actions that the U.N. forces are currently involved in, in the field, and that is one of the things that we discussed this morning. How we can strengthen those actions and make them more effective. We looked at several possibilities; for example, how we could further strengthen the protection of supply convoys; how we could further strengthen the protection of all the humanitarian activities that are taking place in Bosnia; how we can, for example, guarantee and provide for the security of the airport in Sarajevo. These are some of the questions that we looked at this morning.

(Cross talk.)

Q: (Speaks in French.)

MIN. LEOTARD: For that I -- it's up to Bill Perry to state the U.S. position on this particular point. It is my understanding that the administration's position is quite distinct from that of Congress which is something that not only we but our European partners -- the Netherlands, Spain,

the U.K. -- other countries that have troops in Bosnia welcome with great joy. We are very, very pleased to see that the administration has accepted and taken on board our arguments against lifting the embargo unilaterally.

Q: Minister Leotard, have the actions of the events on the ground in the last couple of days eased the pressure for withdrawal of U.N. troops, or have the recent actions by the Bosnian Serbs to block convoys made a withdrawal more likely?

MIN. LEOTARD: Obviously the most recent news we've got is very bad news. The Serbs are continuing to pressure the U.N. forces in the field and it's something we regret. However, that being said, we will not let down our guard and we will not stand idly by. We, therefore, have decided to maintain our humanitarian effort at current levels, and also, to try to strengthen the mission which has received international support of the U.N. forces in Bosnia.

That is to say, we refuse to grant the Serbs the reward that they are apparently seeking and think that they will get, that is the withdrawal of U.N. forces from Bosnia.

Q: Mr. Secretary, would this idea to improve or increase the protection of supply convoys -- would that involve American air power?

SEC. PERRY: That would involve American air power under the same rules that it would be now used, that is, they have to be called for by UNPROFOR and given that it's called for, that's a perfectly appropriate use of American air power and one in which American air power could be quite effective.

Q: But would you -- regardless of the dual key, I mean can you see a situation in which those NATO planes would begin flying air cover over convoys?

SEC. PERRY: Yes, I can see the circumstance in which they would be flying air cover for convoys. Whether they're called upon to attack forces on the ground again would require -- under the present rules of engagement, would require the U.N. to request that strike.

Q: Mr. Leotard, I would like to ask a question on the -- there's been some discussion in Congress about if there is a withdrawal of UNPROFOR then there could be a heavy air campaign launched against the Serb forces. This has been a proposal made by the incoming-Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Gingrich. Do you have an opinion on that question?

MIN. LEOTARD: I've always said that airstrikes are an option. However, they should not be seen as

the sole military tool nor the most adequate military tool for managing this type of conflict. There is this possibility of using closer support -- air support -- for specific missions, and this is something that we have been envisaging, as well as providing air -- or providing air attacks, air strikes against larger objects. Bill Perry and myself in Seville actually came out in favor of stronger action on the part of the U.N. forces along these lines.

But one of the things that for us is totally unthinkable and totally unacceptable is to carry out air strikes without the prior agreement of the U.N. forces in the field. They are the sole judges of the situation in the field.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

SEC. PERRY: There and there.

Q: Can either of you run down for us some more examples of ways in which the UNPROFOR mission and forces can be strengthened in this new context besides air cover for convoys?

SEC. PERRY: The measures which UNPROFOR should be considering for strengthening involve not only more troops and more arms, the new rules of engagement, they will certainly be considering restructuring the forces and redeploying their forces, and in particular, regrouping them in more defensible positions. All of those are decisions for UNPROFOR to take, not for us to take, but as ministers of defense concerned with this, we discussed various alternative ways and are prepared to make recommendations to UNPROFOR as to actions they can take along that line.

Perhaps Minister Leotard would like to add to that.

MIN. LEOTARD: I would firstly like to pay tribute to all of the general officers of UNPROFOR in the field, for they recognize the difficulties that they are up against, and they accept them and try to overcome them. We have already counterattacked, we have already used fire power to try to retaliate against some of the Serb attacks. And there are daily examples of this kind of action that we've carried out. It's very important that you bear in mind that the weaponry that the U.N. forces have in the field is not just light weaponry. They do have the means to defend themselves.

Now, going back to this point of regrouping our troops, this is something that we have been doing gradually. If you recall, at the beginning of 1993 French troops were spread out through seven different sites. We now have brought that down to four different sites. So that is definitely part of our strategy.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

STAFF: This is the last question.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you mentioned that the force that should be sent to Bosnia in case we have to pull out UNPROFOR should be of overwhelming military strength. Could you be more specific in terms of figures, how many troops, and also in terms of command and control? Who would be in command of such an operation?

SEC. PERRY: In my judgment, a military force, a military operation of that nature should be under the command and control of NATO. The NATO is at this time in the process of putting together a plan that could conduct this military operation. They haven't completed that plan yet, so it's premature to speak in numbers, but the guidelines that they've been given for that preparation are to go in with overwhelming military force. And Minister Leotard and I this morning both agreed that that was the proper guideline for the force.

And to put this in rough perspective, it is clear that would require more than a number of battalions. It would not require many divisions. So we're talking about a number of brigades, heavily armed, well-armed brigades. The exact number of brigades and the exact plan is still under discussion.

Q: Dr. Perry, could I ask you just to clear up one thing, if you would? You talked about strengthening the U.N. force, perhaps its mandate, reorganizing it, and you've talked about additional troops. Does this in any way change the United States opposition to putting ground troops into Bosnia to take part in a peacekeeping force?

SEC. PERRY: Our position on ground forces in Bosnia remains as the president announced the other day, which is we reaffirm our commitment to provide ground forces for a peacekeeping operation if a peace agreement has been reached.

We also -- I also today reaffirm that we have agreed in principle to supply ground forces to make a major participation in any NATO extraction. We have not changed our view, however, that we are not sending in ground forces to participate in UNPROFOR under the present conditions.

Q: Are you talking about a U.N. -- further U.N. mandate changes in the Security Council, Mr. Secretary? Is that going to be necessary?

SEC. PERRY: I do not believe that it is necessary to have changes in the U.N. mandate from the Security Council to have an effective force. I do think that what would be required is a change in the procedure, the organization, and the rules of engagement compatible with the charter which they already have.

Q: The existing mandate?

SEC. PERRY: Yes. Compatible with the existing mandate, yes, I believe that can be done.

Minister Leotard, do you believe a mandate change is necessary?

MIN. LEOTARD: There is a mandate that does exist within the U.N. resolutions. Some 60 -- nearly 60 -- 59 resolutions have been adopted to date, and this provides us with ample leeway. One example, one of the things that we did discuss

within this framework that does exist was providing heavy protection to a humanitarian corridor that would go from the Adriatic coast to Sarajevo. This is one of the hypotheses that we've been exploring, especially given the fact that doing so would be much easier now than it was in the past since this area is now fully under the control of Croatian and Muslim forces.

SEC. PERRY: Thank you very much.

Q: Thank you.

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PARIS ENDS THREAT TO DROP ITS ROLE IN BOSNIAN FORCE

SHIFT WELCOMED BY U.S.

France Now Wants to Expand Its Peacekeepers' Mission in the Balkan Conflict

By MICHAEL R. GORDON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12 — One week after Western European proposals to withdraw peacekeeping troops from Bosnia created a diplomatic furor, France reversed course today and said it wanted not only to keep its soldiers in the former Yugoslavia, but also to expand their mission.

"My Government does not wish to see this withdrawal take place," the French Defense Minister, François Léotard, told reporters at a Pentagon news conference after a meeting with Defense Secretary William J. Perry. "It would undermine the credibility of international organizations, namely the United Nations and NATO."

A Pentagon official said Mr. Perry supported Mr. Léotard's position and would try to persuade other Western European defense ministers to go along at a NATO gathering in Brussels on Tuesday and Wednesday. A senior American official said Washington hoped that the defense ministers would endorse a tougher stand.

Last week, France announced that it had asked the United Nations and NATO to draw up detailed plans for the withdrawal of United Nations peacekeeping troops from Bosnia, leaving the impression that the allies were about to abandon their commitment to that country.

American officials said France's threat appeared to have been partly a bluff aimed at scaring the Muslim-dominated Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serbs into making concessions at the bargaining table. It may also have been a signal to

Washington, they say, not to take France's efforts for granted.

Today, outlining a new, more aggressive stand on the eve of the NATO meeting, Mr. Léotard said the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Croatia must be made more credible by demonstrating that it did not operate at the tolerance of the Serbs.

The French official outlined some specific suggestions for how to do this. These include establishing a ground corridor from the Adriatic to Sarajevo for delivering aid that would be protected by United Nations troops and improving the security of the Sarajevo airport.

Signaling his approval, Mr. Perry told reporters that the United Nations should consider expanding the size of its force, equipping it with heavier arms, allowing it to operate under more liberal rules of engagement and redeploying the troops to more defensible positions.

The American Defense Secretary also said Washington would be willing to use American air power to help protect United Nations relief convoys if United Nations officials requested such aid.

Appearing with Mr. Perry, Mr. Léotard made clear that he did not think that Western European governments would agree to send more troops. But he said the United Nations might be able to strengthen its position by redeploying some of its forces.

But putting in place a more forceful policy toward the Bosnian Serbs will not be easy.

Even if Mr. Léotard and Mr. Perry can convince their fellow defense ministers of the wisdom of a tougher approach, the United Nations peacekeeping force would have to agree to take a more forceful stand.

United Nations commanders have been reluctant to confront the Serbs, who have sought to intimidate the peacekeepers in recent weeks by threatening to attack them and by taking hundreds of them hostage.

American officials say that since the United Nations force is under the command of French and British generals, Paris and London are in a position to encourage a tougher stand. In the past, the French and the British have occasionally engaged in tough talk at NATO meetings, apparently calculating that the commanders of the United Nations

Protection Force, as the peacekeepers are formally known, would be unlikely to follow through.

"The French and British can change Unprofor's policies if they want to," a senior Clinton Administration said. "They are the key troop contributors. Whether they will use their influence remains to be seen."

Washington, for its part, has limited leverage because of its refusal to send peacekeeping troops to Bosnia. The Clinton Administration has said it will send up to 25,000 ground troops to Bosnia only for two purposes: to help enforce a peace settlement and to help the Western European countries evacuate their troops if they decide to leave.

The firm position outlined by Mr. Léotard today was the latest twist in a bewildering week of diplomacy in which European governments and Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali of the United Nations stirred up a storm of criticism by rejecting American appeals to use air power to protect the Muslim enclave of Bihac and then talking about removing peacekeeping troops from Bosnia.

Just Wednesday, the French Foreign Minister, Alain Juppé, said that the position of the United Nations peacekeeping force had become untenable and that detailed plans for withdrawal needed to be drawn up.

But Western European threats to withdraw troops backfired by exposing European governments to criticism that they were walking away from Europe's most difficult and

bloody post-cold-war crisis and by encouraging the American Congress to think more seriously about ordering a unilateral violation of arms embargo to help the beleaguered Bosnian Government.

"The talk of getting out makes the Europeans look awful," an Clinton Administration official said.

Making the case against withdrawal, Mr. Léotard said it would lead to a humanitarian crisis, encourage Muslim governments and Russia to enter the war on opposing sides and disgrace the United Nations.

"We refuse to grant the Serbs the reward that they are apparently seeking and think that they will get — that is, the withdrawal of U.N. forces from Bosnia," Mr. Léotard said. "It would lead to the mechanical spreading of the conflict both to the north and the south. It would also change the nature of the conflict, for it would bring in the Islamic forces into this area."

He said he would recommend withdrawal on two conditions: if the American Congress voted to lift the arms embargo unilaterally and if the peacekeeping troops were rendered totally ineffective.

During Mr. Léotard's meeting with Mr. Perry and Anthony Lake, Mr. Clinton's national security adviser, the French asked the Americans if Mr. Clinton was prepared to veto legislation calling for lifting the embargo.

Mr. Lake said a Congressionally mandated decision to lift the embargo unilaterally would be disastrous but was noncommittal as to whether Mr. Clinton would wield a veto. French officials reported.

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More Firepower Sought for U.N. Troops

■ **Bosnia: U.S. and France change course, seek alternative to evacuating peacekeepers. Allies must still approve plan.**

By ART PINE
TIMES STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON—U.S. and French defense ministers proposed a series of measures Monday designed to make U.N. forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina better able to fight back against harassment by Serbian nationalists—as an alternative to evacuating the U.N. peacekeepers.

The defense chiefs, declaring that withdrawing U.N. troops would only spread the war, called for consolidating existing U.N. units to give them more firepower and for revamping the rules of engagement to enable the troops to use their own heavy weapons and to shoot back more readily.

They also proposed setting up a humanitarian aid corridor from the Adriatic coast to the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, and backing it up with heightened use of NATO warplanes to protect both the aid convoys and other U.N. missions.

U.S. Defense Secretary William J. Perry and French Defense Minister Francois Leotard, who outlined the proposals after a meeting here, said they hope to persuade other allies to embrace them at a meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Brussels this week.

If the allies go along, the two ministers said, NATO would then take the measures to the U.N. command in Bosnia and recommend that it put them into practice.

They asserted that the plan would not require any new authority from the U.N. Security Council.

At the same time, however, private analysts cautioned that the series of measures could also heighten the potential for military conflict between the U.N. forces and the Serbs, embroiling the allies more deeply in the war.

Leotard's proposal marked a sharp about-face from the French position expressed last week by Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, who hinted that France was about to withdraw its U.N. peacekeeping forces and argued that more aggressive action by NATO would only endanger them.

On Monday, Leotard warned that withdrawing U.N. forces would further displace Bosnia's civilian population, spread the conflict to neighboring countries and seriously undermine the credibility of both the United Nations and NATO.

He also expressed concern that if U.N. forces were to leave Bosnia, it would "bring . . . Islamic forces" into the region to side with the Bosnian government. France is having political difficulties with Islamic governments and is reluctant to see their power grow.

"My government does not wish to see this withdrawal take place," the French defense minister told reporters here. " . . . We refuse to grant the [nationalist] Serbs the reward that they are apparently seeking and think that they will get [from a U.N. withdrawal]."

U.S. officials stressed that the proposals—which were drafted by Leotard—were preliminary and had not yet been agreed to by other NATO allies.

Perry and Leotard worked together a few months ago to draw up proposals for intensifying NATO air strikes, but, while NATO adopted the plan, the U.N. commanders never took advantage of it. Under current rules, the United Nations has final say in such attacks.

Leotard emphasized Monday that even under the new proposals, NATO forces still would have to wait for U.N. command to formally request air support before NATO warplanes would take off.

"One of the things that for us is totally unthinkable and totally unacceptable is to carry out [NATO] air strikes without the prior agreement of the U.N. forces in the field," Leotard said. France has about 4,000 troops in the U.N. peacekeeping contingent.

The plan that the two ministers outlined for strengthening U.N. peacekeeping forces involved these proposals:

- Alter the rules of engagement for U.N. and NATO forces to enable them to fire at Serbian nationalist units if they harass or attack U.N. peacekeeping troops or take U.N. soldiers hostage. Under current rules, it is difficult for U.N. and NATO troops to return any fire.

- Use NATO air power more fully to provide close air support protection for U.N. supply convoys and humanitarian relief missions and to secure the Sarajevo airport. The warplanes would also be allowed to hit larger Serbian targets, such as radar installations and command posts.

- Consolidating U.N. peacekeeping forces into larger units, to make them less vulnerable to Serbian attacks, redeploying them into positions that can be defended more easily and allowing them to use the

heavy weapons they have to help fend off or attack Serbian forces.

U.N. commanders already have consolidated their forces into fewer sites. But some analysts say they still are too spread out to be very effective militarily.

Perry also reiterated a promise by President Clinton to help evacuate U.N. peacekeeping forces if the allies decide to withdraw them. But he agreed with Leotard's assessment that such a move would prove counterproductive.

Leotard suggested at one point that the allies could also send reinforcements into Bosnia if they wanted to bolster the peacekeeping forces there, but he conceded that at least for the moment such a proposal "does not seem like a very likely scenario."

Unlike Juppe, who laced his remarks last week with criticism of the United States for not providing ground troops for U.N. peacekeeping missions, Leotard praised the Clinton Administration for what he called the "U.S. presence in the former Yugoslavia."

"Many people often forget that the United States is present in the area," Leotard said. He ticked off a list of places where U.S. military personnel are serving, including on aircraft and ships enforcing U.N. embargoes and at U.N. headquarters in Zagreb, Croatia.